



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter  
1<sup>st</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M)  
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



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**M**arhaban (Hello in Arabic)!

Well, we have finally broken 100 degrees, and it is HOT! This week we'll hear about our Mighty Medics and some new training coming up. Also, we get to hear from our "Outlaws" and the fine Soldiers supporting victory up at the Brigade Logistics Cell. Time is continuing to fly by here and the Soldiers are, as always, dedicated to performing their jobs with pride and making the mission happen. We are grateful for all their hard work and sacrifice.

## PHOENIX PROJECTS

The past two weeks have seen many great successes in the realm of projects. Phoenix Soldiers were instrumental in the opening of the Al Anhaf Nahia Building (*Nahia and Qada both refer to levels of governance*) on 9 May and the execution of a media day at the Hussienya Co-Op. The opening of the Nahia Building was a huge step in providing the local governance in the area with much needed legitimacy and a place to conduct their meetings. The media day was a great event as Arab Media proponents were able to interview the Co-Op leadership. In the near future, we plan to open many new facilities to include a new Qada Building, a refurbished school, a new fire station and a beautiful health clinic.

## "WITCHDOCTORS"

Hey, Witchdoctor 7 here with the monthly update. The medics have been doing a myriad of support missions; everywhere the STB goes there is a medic there. Just like the old cadence "everywhere I go, there's a Drill Sergeant there." We have been blessed to be the least utilized asset in the Battalion, something we take pride in. A busy medic is a bad sign. We have been dealing with the



**Above: PFC Johnson gives PFC Utley a shot.**

daily cuts, scrapes, colds, dust allergies (a lot) but the most challenging mission we have accomplished was hunting, ( and I do mean hunting) down your spouses to give them immunizations. I wish you could see these proven combat Soldiers whimper at the sight of needles... hilarious. We also accomplished heat injury prevention training, because - oh man its getting "hot in here".



**Above: Another Witchdoctor taking great care of our soldiers.**

Your Soldiers have been equipped with the knowledge, and they are applying it daily. We are proud of our accomplishments in the medical arena and couldn't have done it without the support of you and your Soldiers. On the horizon, we have combat lifesaver training and field sanitation training. The Witchdoctors would like to extend Happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers in the STB Family. I would also like to wish a Happy Birthday to PFC Genet, PFC Kyle and SGT Escalante. To all of our families back home, thanks for what you do for us. We know that we can't do it without you, and we are forever grateful for the support and caring that you have given us.

Witchdoctor 7 – SFC Antwone Jones

## **NETWORK OPERATIONS – ANOTHER EAGLE MISSION**

As 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade continues to fight the war in Iraq, continual communications support must stand operationally ready twenty-four hours a day. The tactical communications Network of the Raider Brigade includes a wide range of the most up-to-date commercial communications equipment. Bravo Company's Network Operations Cell (NETOPS) is overall responsible for combining this equipment and provides the

entire 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade a robust array of communication capability. The section engineers, install, maintain and monitor all tactical communications inside and out of Camp Taji. They monitor a network of Joint Network Nodes, Command Post Nodes and FM retransmission systems which cover a large battle space. The NETOPS Cell is also responsible for allowing the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade to interface with the entire Division and the strategic network at the Corps level.



**Above: Eagle Soldiers maintaining communications for the Brigade.**

The Network operations Cell is lead by WO1 Collins, the network management technician. WO1 Collins' staff is comprised of eight different communications specialists, skilled technical experts in their respective fields. The team primarily consists of Joint Network Node, Line of Sight, and Satellite Operations Specialists and Information Systems Analysts. The NETOPS Cell established and maintains one of the largest communications footprints in the entire 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

The Network Operations Cell stands ready to immediately troubleshoot the entire network with the deployment of the Tiger Team. The Tiger Team will deploy to any site including the CPN's outside Camp Taji for troubleshooting unexpected outages and performing routine maintenance on communications equipment. Together the Network Operations Cell provides technical support to the entire Brigade ensuring the

seamless flow of communications and overall mission success.

Platoon Leader – 2LT Ronald Carter

## OUTLAWS

The month of April has passed by in what seems like the blink of an eye. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of this month, the Outlaws began working for Task Force 1-66 Armor. Thrown into the Task Organization of the Dark Riders, 1<sup>ST</sup> Platoon became responsible for patrolling Highway 1.

Highway 1 is the main North / South artery for military and civilian traffic in Iraq. Our stretch of the highway encompassed from the gates of Camp Taji to the north 20 kilometers. Due to its importance to the Coalition effort, insurgents frequently attempt to impede US Forces from using the highway in certain areas. One particular segment of the highway has earned itself the nickname “Thunder Dome” from the Soldiers who frequently travel it.

2<sup>nd</sup> Squad was attached to B Troop, 7-10 CAV for one week in April and left Camp Taji to occupy a small outpost outside of Taji. 2<sup>nd</sup> squad was tasked to guard the post while the current unit was on leave. The squad performed its mission admirably.



Above: PFC Mark Reihl “gunning” for the Outlaws.

All things considered the platoon is doing well. Thank you to all of the friends and family that continue to send us packages and

letters, they are always a welcome reminder of home. As spring turns to summer, we hope that the times continue to pass quickly, bringing us all home safely in the fall. Live Free or Die...

-Outlaw Platoon Leader- 1LT Chaz Use

## HOW WE GOT HERE...BY SERGEANT MAJOR SEAMAN

The Special Troops Battalions are one of the new units within the Army. They came into existence during the Army’s transformation into a more modular force. I thought I would talk and try to explain a little about how this unit came to be and how we have done so far in such a short amount of time. Originally, we came from three other Battalions and one company, none of which still exist. They were the 4<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, the 299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, the 124<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion and the 104<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion. I was the Command Sergeant Major for the 299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion; that is how I came to be a part of the 1<sup>st</sup> STB. I am an old combat engineer. I was present when the 299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion deactivated and I have been with the 1<sup>st</sup> STB since its activation. I remember when all the briefings on what and how to do things were given and then the actual initiation of all the changes. So with a flurry of ceremonies across the Division and the Army, units changed and the process of “figuring it out” began. At first there was not a lot written or known about the STB or BSTBs as some are called. Overall, we knew what the right thing to do was as far as what our duties and missions would be. So we went to work building the Battalion from the ground up. We concentrated on the basics, got in shape, shot our weapons, and built the Battalion systems. We created our own motto, designed our own crest, and took care of each other. The bottom line – we started forming the team.



The Division had an impending deployment coming up, the one we are currently on. Time was very short. Our timeline was as follows: On 1 June 05 we deactivated the 299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (M) and on 2 June 05 we activated the 1STB. Also on 2 June, the Battalion Change of Command Ceremony occurred and we welcomed LTC John Cross as our new commander. From 5 July to 15 July 05 we conducted Task Force Lanes. Late August to Early October was spent at the National Training Center (NTC) as we prepared for our pending deployment to Iraq in December 05. There were about 7 months from our conception to our deployment. The Army, the Division, and the Brigade helped us fill our troop billets (MTOE) and equipment shortages. The discipline and strength of the Soldiers were apparent from the start and still remain to this day.

We rolled into Task Force Lanes and learned how to operate as an STB in a field environment, again LTC Cross kept the Battalion focused on the basics. The Battalion performed remarkably well. The training at NTC has changed to focus on the current war. So into the breach we went again and into the heat of the Mojave Desert. The Battalion continued to learn and grow. We trained hard, continued to build and improve our Battalion systems, we learned how to integrate new units and how to employ them, Explosive Ordnance Demolition (EOD) operations, Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), and engineer operations. The Battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC) came together, we fought the OPFOR (successfully I might add), we retrained, refitted, re-supplied, redistributed, retrained, regenerated, and found out how JNN works. We route cleared, Propheted, CGSed, and did it all with OCs present. We received some great guidance and tutelage from LTC(P) Magness and the members of his great Sidewinder Team. NTC was a capstone in this Battalion's short

existence. LTC Cross expertly lead the Battalion through the rigors of NTC; he was everywhere on the battlefield and involved in every aspect of all operations. I also commend every company commander, every officer, every NCO and all the Soldiers for what I consider a very successful rotation.



**Above: MAJ Powell and SFC T-K geared up on a Chinook.**

A few months later we deployed to Iraq. I know that you all know your sons, daughters and loved ones; well, so do I but in a very different way. This Battalion has been very successful in Iraq and it is because of them and what characterizes them that led to our success. I thought I would tell you about that characterization. I know and see your sons, daughters, and loved ones as brave, courageous, laughing, joking, happy, sad, angry, sometimes confused, sweating, learning, maturing, disciplined and doing their duty as well as many other things. This unit, one of many, many units deployed to Iraq and very important because it is the unit that we (your) loved ones are in, is a great outfit. It has some of the Army's best leaders in it. This Battalion has come far in a short period of time; we have been through a lot together (good and bad) and we are doing OK. I just wanted to share some of our short history with you...until next time.

-CSM Larry E Seaman

## A WORD FROM THE BRIGADE LOGISTICS CELL

Every section in the company, every company in the battalion, every battalion in the brigade, they all have one thing in common. They need stuff. Getting us the “stuff” we need to keep going over here is overseen and managed by the folks in the Brigade S4, or Logistics, section.

MAJ Powell’s S4 section sees to it that the Brigade has everything it needs on a daily basis as well as planning for special missions and, our favorite, the distant redeployment of the Brigade to Fort Hood.



**Above: CW2 Kemp hard at work with the property books – making sure we don’t lose anything!**

The Property Book section of the Brigade S4 is headed up by CW2 Kemp, who is ably assisted by SSG Romar. Between them, they manage the property accountability for every company in the brigade. The Transportation section, with WO1 Messenger and SFC Drisdell, handles all movement requests and plans for the cargo requirements for redeployment. CW3 Nero makes sure the mess hall is tracking to feed us all.



**Above: SFC Tapp-Kratzer, MAJ Powell and SPC Wilsey after receiving his award.**

The rest of the folks in the S4 section form the heart of the Brigade logistics cell. MAJ Etzkorn, SFC Tapp-Kratzer, SPC Wilsey, SPC Melver, and PFC Saunders handle everything from printer cartridges to repair work orders on our living quarters. If it’s needed, they get it for us. And our lives are better for it.

Renegades Commander – CPT Ed Cox

## WHAT WE CALL “HUMINT” AND IRAQI CULTURE

Human Intelligence (HUMINT) is both a difficult and rewarding job. We are constantly interacting with the Iraqi people on a daily basis. This gives the HUMINT Soldiers a keen view on how they live their lives and what the Iraqi culture is all about. As expected, it is far different from what we are used to in America. It may surprise some people back home to learn that Iraqis will often invite US soldiers into their houses. Many of the Iraqis also extend a future welcome to the families of our soldiers for a day when they can all meet in peace and friendship.

Family is the center of the Iraqi society. You have the immediate family, extended family, local clan, sub-tribe, tribe... etc. All of these are connected, and family is

the most important thing to an Iraqi. The center of the family is the house of the family patriarch. The family houses will usually be found close together in the same area. When an Iraqi invites you into his house, he will usually bring you into a living room area. This area is where they generally entertain guests. It might be a room full of Persian carpets and pillows or a large room with five to ten couches and numerous small side tables. The tables are important, because that is where they will set out the tea, of which you will drink plenty.

If an Iraqi offers you water, it may be a sign of peace. Water in that way is very symbolic to the Iraqi. If everyone in the room is each brought an individual bottle of water, then he is showing off his wealth, and it is a status symbol. Tea on the other hand is one of the most common beverages that the Iraqi will offer. It is a strong dark tea brewed fresh, poured into small glass cups, and served on small saucers. Sugar is usually heaped into the little glass making it both a strong and very sweet beverage. The way an Iraqi drinks the tea even has a certain meaning. An Iraqi will never let a guest's cup stay empty. Once a cup is empty it is quickly refilled, as many soldiers quickly realize after quaffing up to ten cups of tea in a visit. When the guest is done, a little tea should be left at the bottom of the cup to show that they have had enough. Should the host fill up a cup and the guest not touch it, it normally means that the guest is hungry.

Food is also significant to Iraqis, particularly bread and salt. If an Iraqi offers you food, it is a sign of friendship. If an Iraqi feeds you bread and salt, it means they feel that you are family. Remember, family is the most important thing to an Iraqi, so if a guest is fed and treated as family, then that guest is important to the Iraqi. Just like the tea, if your plate is empty, it will be refilled. The polite thing to do, in Iraqi culture, is leave a small amount of food on the corner of the plate.

After eating, tea is brought out once again. Most conversation takes place, while drinking tea, but while eating silence usually reigns, until the guest and host are finished. Tea is then brought back out, and conversation picks up again. Our soldiers are building partnerships with the Iraqi people, one cup of tea at time.

Alpha Company Human Intelligence Collector  
– SGT Jacob Ritzler



**Above: Future Soldier making his sand table for a mission!**



## **To Dare Is To Do**

**Larry A. Seaman**  
**Command Sergeant Major**  
**U.S. Army**

**John W. Cross**  
**LTC, EN**  
**Commanding**